



Furniture Care for Oil & Wax Finishes

Contemporary Cable | Contemporary Craftsman | Loft | Modern American | Modern Shaker

about

This finish is a technically updated form of the age-old hand-rubbed oil finish that has been used by fine furniture craftsmen for centuries. The base for such a finish is an extremely detailed sanding process. Our craftsman sands every part of the furniture, and then re-sands after assembly to remove nicks and clamp marks. Every piece is put through multiple machine sanding processes, but the ultimate finish is determined by the final hand sanding, since the silky feel of an oil finish is actually determined by the degree of sanding on the wood. Our craftsmen spend a great deal of time on this process.

The actual finish used is a private label product that is very close in composition to several products available on the market, usually under the name Danish Oil.

your new furniture

When you first receive any furniture with an oil finish you may notice the wood is still tacky from the oil applied in the workshop. To remove this or any other residue, use a clean, soft cloth and wipe down the surface of the wood.

If the finish is slightly discolored upon arrival, it is likely due to the oil being absorbed by packaging materials such as blanket wrapping. This can be resolved by re-oiling in the fashion described below. The furniture in these collections should be oiled immediately upon initial receipt with non-toxic, natural Danish linseed oil.

oiling 101

After wiping off all dust and debris, a thin coat of oil should be applied with a rag with the wood grain. We recommend a natural Danish linseed oil. Take care to avoid dripping on carpet or unfinished wood floors! During this first re-oiling, you may use very fine (0000) steel wool to remove any oil bleed-back from the pores that may have dried on the surface. This bleed-back and any dust that has dried on the finish will show up as rough spots on the furniture. Use the steel wool lightly and with the grain, while the furniture is still covered with wet oil, then carefully rub the furniture dry with a separate clean, dry cloth. Do not let the oil dry onto the furniture's surface— this type of finish should be integrated into the surface, allowing the full depth of the color of the wood to be visible. Oil allowed to dry may become sticky.

a lifetime of care

Additional coats of oil can be applied as necessary. Coats should be applied regularly for the first few months and once a year after that. The rich patina of cherry is enhanced by frequent oiling; several coats will build up a protective layer. For all wood types, frequent re-oiling results in a deeper, richer color. Repairs are much simpler with an oil finish than with lacquer or poly finishes, which need to be stripped and reapplied. Should damage occur, remove by rubbing (with the grain) with (0000) steel wool or, if that does not succeed, use a very fine (220) grit sandpaper with a flat wood block behind it. Once the blemish is removed, reapply the oil

until the area is brought to the same level as the rest of the surface. It may take a while for the color of the sanded area to darken to the same level as the un-sanded sections.

Note: All rags that have come into contact with this type of oil MUST be thoroughly wet and stored under water until disposed of outside your home. Oil-soaked rags are a serious fire hazard.

items of note

maintaining the finish

We suggest that you do not use furniture polish, dusting sprays that include a polish, or any wax. While some commercial waxes are compatible with our finish, many have to be stripped before more oil can be applied. Linseed oil-based wax is used on cherry and walnut while maple has a tung-oil based wax.

variations

Quality control allows blemishes, knots and less than perfect color in places not exposed to view after assembly. These do not affect the integrity or beauty of the finished piece of furniture. There also may be variations in the color and darkening of individual pieces of wood. Our craftsmen make every effort to match grain and color within each piece of furniture, however, we cannot guarantee they will match perfectly as they age.

sunlight and cherry

New cherry wood is quite light in color, similar to maple. When it reaches maturity, cherry furniture darkens to a rich red/brown hue. It is important to know the natural darkening of cherry wood is an oxidation process, catalyzed by sunlight. For this reason, objects placed on the surfaces of new cherry furniture will leave lighter areas when they are removed. For the first three months it is best to not place objects on cherry surfaces for prolonged periods of time. To correct these light areas, leave the spot uncovered and the color will “catch up” to the darker surroundings.

humidity

The tendency of wood is to move with changes of heat and humidity. Especially with an oil finish, which does not seal the wood, the pores breathe and try to take on the humidity of the surrounding air. This means that wood will dry in and contract in winter. Conversely, it will take on moisture and swell in the summer months. Our craftsmen have designed the furniture to allow for these seasonal changes.

These natural changes in humidity and movement can be especially prevalent in large panels, such as table tops, and even more so near the end grain of the wood, since those are the pore openings through which the moisture moves. On an extension table top, for example, the ends of the panels will expand more than the center in the summer and contract more in the winter. This results in minor separations between the leaves of the table as the seasons change. This is not a defect—it is characteristic of solid wood furniture. “Fixing” the problem one season by straightening the edges will only result in a worse problem during the following season. Please understand the limitation of wood and enjoy the process as it breathes along with you.

Sudden changes in humidity, as would be caused by placing your furniture near a direct heat source, placing a hot pot on it or storing it in an unheated area, may cause problems.

Vermont Woods Studios • 888.390.5571 • info@vermontwoodsstudios.com
www.vermontwoodsstudios.com • 538 Huckle Hill Road, Vernon, VT 05354

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